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Fedayeen Position Deteriorates in Jordan



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JORDAN-FEDAYEEN: Jordanian officials have raised the possibility of an army move against fedayeen positions before the end of the year.

On 22 December, Crown Prince Hassan told Ambassador Brown that the agreement with the Palestinian guerrillas required them to put their arms in storage by 26 December. Hassan added that if the fedayeen do not carry out their commitment, "they will get a real bloody nose."

Since the clash in Jarash between the Jordanian Army and the fedayeen on 7 December, most of the guerrilla units that had been in the city have had to camp in wooded areas near there and Ajlun, [redacted] Facilities are said to be minimal, food scarce, and morale low. Defections and desertions have risen dramatically and, as winter sets in, are expected to go even higher.

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Elsewhere, most major urban areas have been cleared of fedayeen, [redacted]

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[redacted] Some, mostly militia, remain in Irbid, but reportedly are avoiding contact with the army. The steady trickle of fedayeen from Irbid to Syria could clear that city before long [redacted]

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[redacted] Several entrenched enclaves of fedayeen remain in Amman, but the army holds the high ground and is confident that the remaining positions could be wiped out without much difficulty.

A US Mission officer who traveled through northern Jordan on 22 December reported that the army was in full control of Jarash, Irbid, Mafraq, and Zarqa. No fedayeen checkpoints were encountered during his trip and no uniformed fedayeen were seen in Jarash or Zarqa.

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Although Iraqi Army elements remain concentrated in the Mafraq area, the Crown Prince claimed that the Iraqis have been slowly withdrawing and he hoped that they would soon be down to a division or less. In any event, the Jordanians claim they have the Iraqi troops in Jordan almost completely encircled with superior forces.

The weakness of the fedayeen's military dispositions, together with the absence of the King, who in the past has restrained the military from moving against the guerrillas, could tempt the army to try for a quick and decisive clean-up of fedayeen concentrations in the north and possibly in Amman as well.

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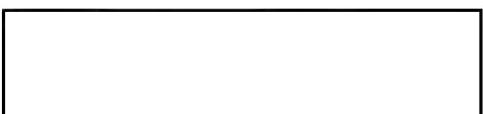
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